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Local Homeless Coordinating Board
Continuum of Care Committee Meeting
FAMILY SHELTER SYSTEM
Friday, September 15, 2000, 1-2:30 PM
290 Turk Street, Community Housing Partnership
AGENDA

For discussion: Introduction and background to the Continuum of Care. Background to th ee

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e action: Proposed process for addressing families in shelter

le action: Proposed regular meeting date

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SAN FRANCISCO LOCAL HOMELESS COORDINATING BOARD

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Continuum of Care Committee Meeting
FAMILY SHELTER SYSTEM
Friday, September 15, 2000, 1-2:30 PM
290 Turk Street, Community Housing Partnership
AGENDA

I. **For discussion:** Introduction and background to the Continuum of Care. Background to the creation of this committee

II. **For discussion and possible action:** Proposed process for addressing families in shelter

III. **For discussion with possible action:** Proposed regular meeting date

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LOCAL HOMELESS COORDINATING BOARD

Minutes of the Family Shelter System Continuum of Care Committee

Friday, September 15th, 2000, 1-2:30 PM, 290 Turk Street, SF

PRESENT: Ramona Benson, co-chair, THC; Joyce Miller, co-chair, COH/FRD; Ina Moon, Riley Center; Bianca Henry, FRD/COH; Esther Chavez, CCHH; Willow Schrager, Clare Nolan, Harder & Co; Elizabeth Washington, Sandra Stewart, DHS/FCOS; Felechia Harris, HPP; Maria Martinez, DPH; Emil DeGuzman, HRC; Helen Birch, CC/St. Joseph's; Johanna Keeley, MOOH; Jackie Henderson, COH/FRD; Krea Gomez, HPP

Joyce Miller introduced herself as Co-chair of the Family Shelters Services Sub-Committee. She will be co-chairing this committee with Ramona Benson, another Local Board member. Joyce is a member of the Local Homeless Coordinating Board and works for Family Rights and Dignity through the Coalition on Homelessness.

Joyce explained that the Local Board is re-writing the Continuum of Care Plan, which is San Francisco's plan for services for homeless people. The original plan was for five years. It started in 1996 and expires in 2001. She noted that much of the old plan was not implemented and that there is nothing about shelters in the old plan. After the Single Adult Shelters committee was established this year, the Local Board approved a Family Shelters Committee. This is the first meeting of this committee. Joyce observed that it is necessary and important to talk about families in the plan. She explained that this committee needs to finish its work by November. The consultants will write the plan based on the notes of the various committees during the months of December and January. Their draft will be reviewed by the committees and by the public. Bianca Henry asked how people who are unable to read could review the plan. Joyce said that Family Rights and Dignity could set up a meeting for this purpose.

Joyce told the Sub-Committee that the consultants have given the chairs of each committee a work plan outline. The tasks for this committee are 1) to define their strategy area, 2) assess the environment, 3) identify and rank needs, and 4) develop action steps for the next five years. She added that the Local Board will set up some kind of review process to find out if the action steps are being followed. Regarding data this committee should review, Joyce explained that the Mayor's Office of Homelessness is doing a homeless count of people on the streets and people in shelter beds. However, it is challenging to assess the number of homeless people because of people who are sharing premises with someone else. Bianca commented that using the DHS numbers of people who go through Connecting Point would not work, because there are some people who are afraid to get money. Joyce agreed and added that DHS defines a family as one adult and two children and this is inaccurate also.

Maria Martinez asked what definition of homelessness is being used for the plan. Joyce responded that there is no official definition and that she has raised this issue before the Local Board on several occasions. The Committee agreed that there were several groups that should be included in this definition and the definition of family, including those who are residing at SROs and families in treatment beds. Shelter Plus Care identifies families as at least one adult with minor children or children over 18 if they are handicapped. This appears to be a broad and inclusive definition.

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Helen Birch noted that it can be hard for pregnant women in their first or second trimester to get a bed. For this reason, the committee may want to include pregnant women in the definition of family. Sandra Stewart commented that the narrowing of the pregnant women's eligibility by trimester came about because of narrowing capacity in shelter beds. Helen Birch noted that at St. Joseph's, the discussion about the third trimester stems from what some people see as women's increased medical need at that time. However, Helen sees the first and second trimesters as a time when women really need support and a bed. Sandra asked why families aren't a priority in the shelter system. She thinks families are much worse off than they used to be.

Maria asked what the scope of this committee is. Joyce answered that Strengthening Adult Shelters is looking at all sorts of things, including discharges from hospitals and jails, and that this committee can take things where they see fit. Maria asked Joyce whether she thought that family issues are well represented in other committees. Joyce said, she does not think so, but she raises families in every committee meeting she goes to, so people are aware of it when she's there. Joyce explained that since this topic was not covered in the last plan, this committee is starting from scratch. Maria commented that she would rather see a homeless families category with shelters as part of that.

Helen reports at St. Joseph's shelter 5 from 48 families were unable to find housing after 6 months and this was when they did everything right. It's been very frustrating for both the family and staff.

Joyce encouraged the group to name barrier for families in shelter. The first was lack of low income affordable housing and ability to pay move-in costs. Concerns were expressed over what the housing committee will focus on. Credit repair was stressed as a big issue for families trying to transition out of the shelters. Consumer credit council was named, as well as Echo in Oakland. When the Coalition on Homelessness held the Homeless People's Congress, several families said that the lack of living wage jobs, particularly for people exiting welfare. This issue overlaps with the Income, Education and Employment Sub-Committee. Lack of a living wage was a barrier. Joyce also identified the new HUD regulations around who gets into public housing as another barrier. A press conference is being planned for September 27th at 10 AM to address the changes in public housing to be held at City Hall. Lack of knowledge of the system was identified as a barrier. In general, the group felt family's voices were silenced.

Suggestions for addressing barriers included partnerships with corporations to train workers for higher wage jobs. Johanna reported she would take these ideas that apply to other committees back to those groups. However, this group has a short amount of time and the focus was meant to solely be families in shelters. A discussion was held about the loss of beds with the transition into 260 Golden Gate. Johanna pointed out that the family shelter system has always been in crisis and thoughtful planning has never really been possible, due to the constant flow of emergencies. This group has a real opportunity to think outside the crisis mode. The group has the opportunity to recommend both long and short term goals.

Family needs were listed. These include: substance abuse; mental health; medical; treatment, schooling; domestic violence; couples counseling; poverty; hunger; CPS, which forces families

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into the adult system without their children; family planning, environmental education; lack of community. The fact that SF acts as a magnet city was noted.

It was discussed that the group will need to look outside the shelter system for creative responses, such as community response or underused resources. Ideas like house sharing were volunteered.

Johanna described the focus group process that the Board is doing. She will make sure flyers and information get out to people. The group was encouraged to participate in the Board process, both at public comment at the full Local Board meeting (next meeting October 16th, 3-5:30 at 555 Franklin) or at any of the Continuum of Care meetings. Maria expressed that we will need to sell how families are different from singles, not just more people. Our solutions need to deal with generations. This is a guiding principle and philosophy. For every dollar spent on singles, another should be spent on families.

The Continuum of Care plan should support other community planning processes in the City; particularly the work of Treatment on Demand council, due to the link between substance abuse and homelessness.

Joyce outlined the steps the committee needs to do. The group needs to examine the current inventory. SRO's should be included. Gaps need to be identified. Short and long term goals can then be developed and worked into action steps, according to the consultants work plan. We should think about federal and state funding streams we can tap into. Our time frames can be short term-1-2 years; medium at 2-4 years and long term are 5 years and more.

Frustration was expressed that the Local Board hadn't identified the family issue early enough. Meeting adjourned at 2:30.

NEXT MEETINGS FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6TH, 1-2:30 AT 995 MARKET, 14TH FLOOR
OCTOBER 20TH, 1-2:30, LOCATION TO BE ANNOUNCED.

Notes taken by Johanna Keeley, Clare Nolan.

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Continuum of Care Committee Meeting

FAMILY SHELTER SYSTEM

Friday, October 6, 2000, 1-2:30 PM
995 Market Street, 14th floor
AGENDA

I. **For discussion and possible action:** One day planning session to develop family goals for emergency shelter

II. **For discussion:** Current shelter inventory and identification of gaps in services.

All meeting are open and participation is strongly encouraged. Your participation can make a difference in creating change, growth and opportunity pertaining to families in the emergency shelter system. We'll need everyone's help to create a good product!

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LOCAL HOMELESS COORDINATING BOARD

Minutes of the Family Shelter System Continuum of Care Committee

Friday, October 6, 2000, 1-2:30 PM, 995 Market, 14th floor, SF

PRESENT: *Ramona Benson, co-chair, THC; Joyce Miller, co-chair, COH/FRD; Willow Schrager, Clare Nolan, Harder & Co; Sandra Stewart, DHS/FCOS; Falechia Harris, HPP; Helen Birch, CC/St. Joseph's; Johanna Keeley, MOOH; Jackie Henderson, COH/FRD; Arnett Watson, Client advocate; Cindy Ward, DHS; Teresa Mullen, THC; Helen Meier, Silvia Bielser, Compass; Cathy Hanville, Hamilton; Daniel Pascoe, Connecting Point; Peter Wright, Raphael House; Beth Stokes, Hamilton.*

Joyce Miller called the meeting to order at 1:05. This is the second meeting of this committee. Joyce reviewed the Local Board's timeline on the Continuum of Care update process. The DPH definition of homelessness was passed out. Cindy Ward reviewed the different definitions DHS uses, depending on the funding source. The City is working towards one definition. Cindy informed the group of the one-day retreat, scheduled for 10/20, from 10-4 at Goodwill at Van Ness/Mission. She reviewed the list of participants and how the meeting is limited in space but the present committee will review all work from the retreat. An outside facilitator, Yolanda will be chairing the retreat. Yolanda has done previous work with DHS in the development of the Mission Neighborhood Resource Center. Cindy hopes to have some planning sessions for the retreat with the co-chairs, herself, Yolanda and Johanna. The goal of the retreat is to develop action steps to be reviewed by the committee. Cindy passed out a survey that can be used to bring broad input to the retreat. FRD did a 260 Golden Gate survey just for families but it wasn't specific to shelters. Clare Nolan passed out the assessment of the current family shelter environment.

The group began to look at the numbers of beds in the system. All agreed that there simply is not enough capacity for everyone. With 100 families on the Connecting Point (CP) wait list, that can be roughly translated to the need of 300 additional beds. The group decided to begin their planning assuming the opening of 260 Golden Gate and came up with a number of 318 emergency beds as of spring, 2001.

The committee turned the topic of access and capacity. Daniel Pascoe discussed access to the CP wait list, Raphael House, four daily hotel placements and the emergency beds at Hamilton. There are 4 beds at Hamilton, one night only. Daniel estimates there are 10-20 calls per day for the hotel. Other calls are families checking in. There is no way to know how many of these calls are new intakes coming through the hotline. He estimates 6 families per day average between Hamilton and the hotel vouchers. Centralized access can be confused with lack of capacity. The families get concerned that because it takes so long to get a shelter bed, that they are not getting access and there is a feeling of being passed over. Daniel described the phone assessment process and how a family is triaged to use every available resource before entering into a shelter or emergency bed. Daniel clarified that he believes they have access to the shelter system, which shouldn't be confused with accessing a shelter bed. Two staff are at the phones at 9 AM sharp to handle the hotel vouchers. CP has 4.0 FTE crisis counselors. Clarification was had on that families could be prioritized to rise on the list but that no family is ever placed lower. There are some families that are 'revolving door'; i.e.; they sign up at CP before their shelter stay is up because they know they will need more time.

The group discussed that there are capacity issues both at entrance into the shelter system and exit. It is a hard decision about where to put scarce resources either to the 'front-end' or the exits.

Arnett commented that she feels SF missed the boat on building affordable family housing. Johanna brought up the idea of a regional approach and discussed the Regional Steering Committee, chaired by Homebase. It must be kept in mind that we wouldn't want to uproot a family to another county if it meant a critical disruption in support services. Aftercare is key.

Pending action step: More aftercare and aftercare that can continue if a family goes out of county.

Raphael House already does this in Oakland.

Pending action step: Enhance the FEBCO program.

Pending action step: More supportive services geared towards economic stability in the shelter.
The group agreed that it could be a myth that SF has more services than other counties. A difficult decision would be whether or not we wanted to prioritize SF residents. At this point, it was discussed how families themselves could have more input. Joyce and Ramona agreed to facilitate a focus group for families in the shelter and at HPP. This is in addition to the survey that Cindy is gathering. The group agreed SF has capacity issues but not necessarily access issues.

The group turned to the topic of environment. It was agreed that communal bathrooms and kitchens could be a problem. Some shelters are cleaner than others, mostly due to location and structure. Some are too crowded. The Covered Wagon is horrible but its all Compass has. Child safety can be an issue. Johanna suggested as a recommendation that all shelters have playgrounds, gardens and kid's only space. Many of the building the City is using for families weren't designed for families. The group briefly touched on dry and wet shelters.
For exits, the idea of a housing specialist was discussed. Hamilton employs one and they do a great job. It didn't work at Compass. However, the group agreed that sharing resources was critical to a family's chance of getting permanent housing. We need more resources like HPP, who helps with the search and move-in costs. Sandra would like to see more housing specialists. Arnett said that could work at 260 Golden Gate but we need specific funding for that position. A housing specialist is a special skill and to be successful, the right person needs to be in the job. Maybe a collaboratively funded housing specialist? More training to share resources was recommended.
A discussion was had as to the pros and cons of having mental health and substance abuse personnel at the shelter. Confidentiality is a must for the success of these programs. It is also important to 'own one's own recovery' by going out to seek recovery services.

Pending action step: Evening groups and childcare for substance abuse and mental health issues.
Pending action step: County specialist to identify housing resources.
Next meeting will be November 3rd from 1-2:30, location to be announced. The group will be reviewing the action steps from the retreat. Meeting adjourned at 2:30.
Notes taken by Johanna Keeley, MOOH

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Continuum of Care Committee Meeting

FAMILY SHELTER SYSTEM

Friday, ~~October~~ November 3, 2000, 1-2:30 PM
290 Turk Street, 2nd Floor
AGENDA

1. **For discussion and possible action**: Review of proposed action steps and recommendations of one day retreat from October 20, 2000

All meeting are open and participation is strongly encouraged. Your participation can make a difference in creating change, growth and opportunity pertaining to families in the emergency shelter system. We'll need everyone's help to create a good product!

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